

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
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FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1727
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
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CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L KUALA LUMPUR 0283

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O.11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, MASS, MY
SUBJECT: GOM ANTI-CORRUPTION POSTURE

REF: A. KUALA LUMPUR 0141, B. KUALA LUMPUR 0018,
C. 77 KUALA LUMPUR 7894 (NOTAL) AND PREVIOUS

1. A NUMBER OF RECENT EVENTS HAVE UNDERScored THE CON-
TINUED DETERMINATION OF PRIME MINISTER HUSSEIN ONN AND
HIS ADMINISTRATION TO FOCUS ON THE PROBLEM OF OFFICIAL
CORRUPTION. HUSSEIN IN HIS ANNUAL NEW YEAR'S EVE
ADDRESS TO THE NATION PLEDGED TO MAINTAIN A CLEAN,
HONEST AND EFFICIENT ADMINISTRATION AND THEREBY
"STRENGTHEN CONFIDENCE AND TRUST AT HOME AND ABROAD."
HE WARNED GOVERNMENT SERVANTS AGAINST "ABUSING POWER,
DEVIATION, DISHONESTY AND BREACH OF TRUST" AND
DECLARED THAT HE "WILL ON NO ACCOUNT PROTECT OR
EXCUSE ANYONE GUILTY OF THESE PRACTICES" BUT WOULD
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"LET THE COURT DETERMINE THEIR GUILT AND THE LAW
METE OUT THEIR PUNISHMENT."

2. AS IF TO PUNCTUATE THESE COMMENTS, IT WAS
ANNOUNCED ON JANUARY 4, 1978, THAT THE TRIAL OF
RETIRED GROUP CAPTAIN AHMAD SHAH BIN HASHIM, WHO
IS ACCUSED OF CORRUPTION IN THE ROYAL MALAYSIAN

AIR FORCE PURCHASE OF NORTHROP F-5 FIGHTERS, HAD BEEN TRANSFERRED TO THE HIGH COURT FROM THE SESSIONS COURT. A ONE-MONTH PERIOD (MAY 2 TO 31) HAS BEEN SET ASIDE ON THE DOCKET FOR THE CASE, WHICH HAS RECEIVED CONSIDERABLE ATTENTION FROM INVESTIGATORS OF THE MALAYSIAN NATIONAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION (NBI). THAT INVESTIGATION INCLUDED INTERVIEWS BY NBI INVESTIGATORS OF NORTHROP OFFICIALS AT THE CORPORATION'S U.S. HEADQUARTERS. (FYI: WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE NBI INVESTIGATORS WERE PLEASED WITH THE COOPERATION THEY RECEIVED FROM NORTHROP).

3. COMMENT: IN REFLECTING FURTHER ON THE PM'S SPEECH, WHICH FOLLOWED BY A FEW HOURS THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF A RESHUFFLE OF HIS CABINET (REFS A AND B), IT APPEARS LIKELY THAT AT LEAST SOME OF THE ANTI-CORRUPTION STRESS IN HIS ADDRESS RELATED TO THESE CABINET CHANGES. FOR MANY MONTHS A NUMBER OF DISPARATE ELEMENTS HAVE BEEN CALLING FOR LAW MINISTER/ATTORNEY GENERAL TAN SRI KADIR YUSOF'S SCALP, INCLUDING SUPPORTERS OF CHARISMATIC MALAY NATIONALIST FIGURE DATUK HARUN IDRIS, FORMER LEADER OF THE DOMINANT UMNO PARTY'S POWERFUL YOUTH WING AND EX-CHIEF MINISTER OF SELANGOR STATE. HARUN STANDS CONVICTED ON A NUMBER OF CHARGES RELATING TO CORRUPTION AND ABUSE OF OFFICE (OTHER CONFIDENTIAL

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CHAREGES ARE PENDING) AND HIS ZEALOUS SUPPORTERS HOLD KADIR RESPONSIBLE FOR A MAJOR ROLE IN THEIR HERO'S POLITICAL DOWNFALL. ALTHOUGH UNQUESTIONABLY KADIR PLAYED A KEY PART (ALONG WITH HUSSEIN HIMSELF AND FORMER NBI CHIEF TAN SRI IBRAHIM SALLEH) IN INITIATING AND PURSUING THE GOVERNMENT'S LEGAL ACTIONS AGAINST HARUN, THE FORMER'S REMOVAL FROM THE LAW MINISTRY/ATTORNEY-GENERALSHIP APPEARS UNRELATED TO THE HARUN AFFAIR. INSTEAD, HIS DEPARTURE IS SEEN AS AN EFFORT TO DEFUSE CONTROVERSIES OVER HIS ALLEGED HIGH-HANDED APPROACH TO SECURITY LEGISLATION AND RESULTANT POOR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE MALAYAN BAR COUNCIL. (KADIR HAS BEEN THE ONLY MALAYSIAN TO SERVE AS ATTORNEY GENERAL, AND CRITICS ALLEGED THAT HIS CRUSTINESS STEMMED FROM BEING TOO LONG IN THE JOB.) IN FACT IT SEEMS LIKELY THAT THE STRESS ON THE ANTI-CORRUPTION THEME IN THE PM'S SPEECH IS A CONSCIOUS EFFORT TO SERVE NOTICE THAT KADIR'S DEPARTURE SHOULD NOT IMPLY A SOFTENING OF THE GOM'S POLICY AGAINST OFFICIAL CORRUPTION IN GENERAL OR RE THE HARUN CASE IN PARTICULAR.

4. FURTHERMORE, ALTHOUGH SOME OBSERVERS VIEW KADIR'S REASSIGNMENT TO HEAD THE MINISTRY OF LANDS AND DEVELOPMENT AS BUT A FACE-SAVING SOP, OTHERS READ GREATER SIGNIFICANCE IN THE MOVE. ACCORDING TO THIS THESIS KADIR'S POSTING IS AIMED AT WEEDING OUT SUPPORTERS OF THE FORMER INCUMBENT, ISLAMIC PARTY (PAS) HEAD DATUK ASRI MUDA, WHOSE PARTY WAS RECENTLY EXPELLED FROM THE RULING NATIONAL FRONT COALITION, AS WELL AS A GENERAL CLEAN-UP OF WHAT IS REPUTED TO BE A CORRUPTION-RIDDEN MINISTRY (WHOSE FUNCTIONS RELATE TO POLITICALLY ADVANTAGEOUS LAND DISTRIBUTION AND DEVELOPMENT ISSUES). THUS IN THIS LIGHT KADIR'S APPOINTMENT
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WOULD SERVE NOT ONLY AS AN EFFORT TO RESTORE PUBLIC CONFIDENCE BUT ALSO TO PUT PAS ON NOTICE THAT ITS MEMBERS ARE VULNERABLE TO PROSECUTION FOR ABUSES COMMITTED WHEN THAT MINISTRY WAS UNDER ITS CONTROL.
MILLER

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